SECTION 4: COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

INTRODUCTION

DYNAMICS OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

HOW TO BEGIN FORMING COLLOBORATIONS

BUILDING SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIPS

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

1. Introduction

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

Margaret Mead

Every community has its own characteristics, resources, leaders and priorities. The following information provides suggestions and strategies from multiple authorities on building community collaborations and partnerships that can be considered and adapted by each county program leader to enhance community involvement.

2. Dynamics of Community Involvement

The purpose of community collaborations is to provide the most efficient resources to ensure student success. Partnerships and community collaborations allow adult education programs:

• To provide more comprehensive services to students
• To use existing funding more efficiently
• To advertise adult education services
• To generate student referrals

As defined by the Oregon Center for Community Leadership, community involvement consists of the following levels – Networking, Cooperation or Alliance, Coordination or Partnership and Coalition and Collaboration.

Levels of Community Involvement

Levels	Purpose	Structure	Process
Networking	• Dialog and common understanding • Clearinghouse for information • Create base of support	• Non-hierarchical • Loose/flexible link • Roles loosely defined • Community action is primary link among members	• Low key leadership • Minimal decision making • Little conflict • Informal communication
Cooperation or Alliance	• Match needs and provide coordination • Limit duplication of services • Ensure task are completed	• Central body of people as communication hub • Semi-formal links • Roles somewhat defined • Links are advisory • Group leverages/raises money	• Facilitative leaders • Complex decision making • Some conflict • Formal communications within the central group
Coordination or Partnership	• Share resources to address common issues • Merge resource base to create something new	• Central body of people consists of decision makers • Roles defined • Links formalized • Group develops new resources and joint budget	• Autonomous leadership but focus in on issue • Group decision making in central and subgroups • Communication is frequent and clear
Coalition	• Shares ideas and be willing to pull resources from existing systems • Develop commitment for a minimum number of years	• All members involved in decision making • Roles and time defined • Links formal with written agreement • Group develops new resources and joint budget	• Shared leadership • Decision making formal with all members • Communication is common and prioritized
Collaboration	• Accomplish shared vision and impact benchmarks • Build interdependent system to address issues and opportunities	• Consensus used in shared decision making • Roles, time and evaluation formalized • Links are formal and written in work assignments	• Leadership high, trust level high, productivity high • Ideas and decisions equally shared • Highly developed communication

Community partners should have focused involvement to serve adult education students. Partners may include:

- Postsecondary Education Institutions
- Local One-Stop
- Business, Industry and Labor
- Programs for Families and Children
- Local Workforce Investment Board
- P-16 Councils
- Community-Based Organizations
- Local Service Clubs
- Schools – Head Start, Family Resource Centers
- Local courts
- Drug courts

4. How to Begin Forming Collaborations

Before reaching out to a potential partner, determine the following:
- Whom do they serve? Do you have common clients?
- What can they offer your program and students?
- What is **their** objective or need? Can you assist them?

Barbara Gray defines three phases to collaboration.

In phase one, these issues must be addressed:
- The parties must arrive at a shared definition of the problem, including how it relates to the interdependence of the various stakeholders.
- The parties must make a commitment to collaborate.
- other stakeholders must be identified whose involvement may be necessary for the success of the endeavor.
- The parties must acknowledge and accept the legitimacy of the other participants.
- The parties must decide what type of convener or leader can bring the parties together.
- The parties must determine what resources are needed for the collaboration to proceed.

During the second phase, the parties:
- establish ground rules,
- set the agenda,
- organize subgroups ("especially if the number of issues to be discussed is large or the number of stakeholders exceeds the twelve- to-fifteen-member limit for effective group functioning"),

- undertake a joint information search to establish and consider the essential facts of the issue involved,
- explore the pros and cons of various alternatives and
- reach agreement and settle on a course of action.

The final stage includes implementation and the following occurs:
- Participating groups or organizations deal with their constituencies.
- Parties garner the support of those who will be charged with implementing the agreement.
- Structures for implementation are established.
- The agreement is monitored and compliance is ensured.

5. Building Successful Partnerships

Richard Wellins suggests these necessary skills that successful collaborative leaders must possess:

- Ability to learn
- Business planning
- Communication (oral and written)
- Delegation of authority and responsibility
- Developing organizational talent
- Follow-up
- Identification of problems
- Individual leadership (influence)
- Information monitoring
- Initiative
- Judgment
- Maximizing performance
- Motivation to empower others
- Operational planning
- Rapport building

The *Journey to Successful Collaborations* proposes the following as a guide to successful collaborations:

1. Clearly define the problem or situation, and ascertain that forming a collaboration is the best solution.
2. Invite members from as many diverse segments of the community as are compatible with your mission.
3. Develop a common vision of the project to ensure feelings of shared ownership.
4. Ensure that everyone has a voice and is treated respectfully.
5. Clearly define program and collaboration goals.
6. Define a process and plan of work.
7. Establish and nurture trusting working relationships between collaborators.
8. Provide benefits to members and align reward structure (if any) with collaborative goals.
9. Evaluate program and collaboration to provide evidence of outcomes and impact.
10. Modify, expand and/or drop collaboration to maximize success and/or sustainability as required by program mission.

Gray, Barbara, *Collaborating: Finding Common Ground for Multiparty Problems* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1989) 329 pp.

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Strieter, Linda and Blalock, Lydia. *Journey to Successful Collaborations*. Journal of Extension. February 2006, 44(1).

Wellins, Richard S., Byham William C., and Wilson, Jeanne M. *Empowered Teams: Creating Self-Directed Work Groups that Improve Quality, Productivity, and Participation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991), pp. 132-22

Adult Education Handbooks and Guides from Other States

Indiana Department of Education/ Division of Adult Education
- Program Director Handbook
  http://www.doe.state.in.us/adulted/admin_handbook.html